



## SAN DIEGO STATE AZTECS MEDIA RELATIONS

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### San Diego State Football Press Conference Quotes

Tuesday, Nov. 13, 2018

Fowler Athletics Center

#### Head Coach Rocky Long

##### **Opening statement:**

"I think we're playing the best team in the league this week. I know that they lost to Boise State last week, but if you look at them on offense, defense and special teams, they're the most veteran team in our league and they're probably the best football team in our league. They've proven it over and over and over again as the season has gone on. So it's quite a challenge."

##### **On what were the keys to Boise State's victory over Fresno State:**

"I think they took what they could get. I think Fresno does a great job of keeping everything in front of them, rallying to the ball, in order to prevent a lot of the other team scoring. Then obviously, their offense can score a lot and quickly. I don't think they did anything special. Fresno did what they do; Boise did what they do, and Boise just had the best of that day. I would bet Fresno will beat them if there was a rematch."

##### **On if the significance of the Fresno State game is diminished after Saturday's loss to UNLV:**

"You know, I've really thought about this a lot. We're a struggling football team. We have been all year long. So you start looking for reasons and it's very, very simple. I've looked back over the numbers of years that I've been here. We had a year like this in 2014 and it was exactly for the same reason. Very few seniors and a whole lot of freshmen. Well, this week on their two-deep, they have three times as many seniors as they do freshmen and on our two-deep, we have just as many freshmen playing as we do seniors. We can discuss the expectation level, the disappointment and all you want to talk about, but in reality, there are reasons that we are an inconsistent football team, a struggling football team and guess what, we're bowl eligible and we have a winning record. So if you take the emotion out of this and take the true facts, we're playing about like we should play. I try real hard to take the emotion out of it because I'm kind of an emotional guy; I don't show it very much, but I have it inside. Our expectation level as a program has risen to the point that maybe it's unrealistic. You have to determine how many veteran players, how many good players you have and all those sorts of things, and if you want the truth, this team has overachieved. By the number of freshmen that we're playing and by the number of injuries that we've had, this team in reality in the world of football, if you take all the emotion and the media out of it, has overachieved already. This late in the season being bowl eligible and already having a winning record and still have a minute chance to win the (Mountain West) championship, I would bet there would be several teams who would be happy with that ... You've heard me say this and I'm even more convinced we are who we are. We have some talent, we're inconsistent and we're young and we're beat up and we play really, really hard, so that gives us a chance to win."

**On the inconsistent performance of the offensive line:**

"I don't think we've played on the offensive line, which is disappointing. I think everybody is beat up at this time. I think that our offensive line is beat up and playing with injuries and all of that sort of thing. At this time of year, everybody is. But our offensive line has not met our expectation level ... I don't have an exact reason why."

**On if beating teams like Arizona State and Boise State has helped the team from losing confidence:**

"I think when you have a lot of young players, you struggle with confidence anyway. The more you don't play up to outside expectation levels, the lack of confidence increases dramatically because everybody's telling them they should win by this much or if you lose to a team the whole world's coming down. Well if you're an old guy like me, that don't mean anything to me. You can say whatever you want, but to an 18-year-old, that is a definite hit to his confidence level."

**On the comparing the losses to Nevada and UNLV:**

"I think Nevada is a good football team. They're still in the hunt for the conference championship to be honest with you. I think losing to a struggling team like UNLV, and I even said this after the game, that's not a shock to me. I mean, their coaches have done a good job keeping them playing hard and their veteran talent is as good or better than ours. So them playing hard and having a chance to win wasn't surprising to me at all. You want the real surprise? We have this young of a football team trying to live up to this expectation level and they've won seven games. That's the surprise. Now I'm looking at it purely by facts, not by emotion, not by expectation level, purely by facts. We've got a bunch of really good young players who are going to be something special in probably two years. Guess what, they are not now. They're out of their league and because they're trying so hard, they compete."

**On whether if there's any substitute for experience, such as coaching young players up:**

"No, experience is the main factor and this experience will do them well later on in their careers. The frustrating part is coaching them because if you take one approach, it affects a few of them, but it doesn't affect all of them. You take another approach and it affects maybe a different group of guys, but it doesn't affect all of them. They haven't been in our program long enough to know how they're supposed to react to certain things. They're still trying feel their way about those kinds of things."

**On how well he knows his football team:**

"I'm not sure I know them very well at all. I think when you have a bunch of youngsters in your program, you're feeling your way, too. Now I will give you this, they will play hard this week and they will compete, so I think it'll be another close game."

**On comparing the team's performance the last several weeks after winning at Boise State:**

"Everybody has a good day, but you have to take the entire body of work to determine what kind of football team you are. Everybody has a good day and I hope we have another good day before it's all over. I mean, we might not have another good day, but maybe we'll have another good day here in our next three games."

**On Fresno State quarterback Marcus McMaryon:**

"I think their quarterback is the difference in their program because last year they made an amazing turnaround, which means they had some talent in their program. They made an amazing turnaround and the biggest difference was a different quarterback. He's playing at a higher level this year than he did last year. The only way you get good quarterbacks to not play well is pressure ... Now, they also have two or three outstanding receivers, which means if you want to get pressure, there are a whole lot of one-on-one situations out there. You know our philosophy around here; we're going to take a chance to win the game, which means it's going to be close and we're going to have a chance to win the game or we might get beat by 60. That's the truth. Or, we can go and be those scared little boys and walk in there and play things soft and we only get beat by 35. Gee whiz, that doesn't seem the way to live life to me. I'd rather get beat by 60 trying to win than lose by 35 trying not to be embarrassed."

**On the Aztecs' quarterback situation this week:**

"Christian (Chapman) is starting at quarterback. Chap's our starting quarterback, but Ryan (Agnew) will get a couple of series in the first half and then our coaches will decide who gives us the best chance to win."

**On whether the quarterback rotation has contributed to offensive inconsistency:**

"No, I think the offense has been inconsistent all year long. It was inconsistent when Christian was the only quarterback, it was inconsistent when Ryan was the only quarterback, so that hasn't changed now that we have two of them."

**On keeping Ryan Agnew in at quarterback for the remainder of the UNLV game:**

"Our offensive line has not played up to the expectation level; they were not playing very well in that game, so we couldn't run the ball effectively and we couldn't protect the passer effectively. So the smartest thing to do was put the guy that's the most mobile in there who actually gave you a chance to make some plays."

**On what makes Fresno State's Marcus McMaryon such a special quarterback:**

"His stats are really impressive. It doesn't matter if you play man or zone against him, he completes a very high percentage of his passes. He's got a couple of receivers that make him look good, too. I mean, he just throws it in the area and they go catch it. But I thought he was a good quarterback last year, too, and he's just more comfortable this year."

"I think coach (Jeff) Tedford is considered a quarterback guru. I mean, he always has been. I think that him being there really helps the quarterbacks."

**On if he thinks Fresno State's defense is unsung:**

"I don't know if it's unsung. I mean, everybody kind of tends to get their point of view by how the offense plays. I mean, I read and I listen on TV and I listen on the radio and very seldom is the defense ever mentioned. Unless the defense was actually dominant, very seldom is a defense ever mentioned. It's all about how the offense plays. Most people make their view of what kind of team you have by how well the offense plays. Well guess what, they're just as good on defense as they are on offense, but I read a lot more about their offense than I do about their defense."

**On the rivalry with Fresno State:**

"The last two years when we had a bunch of juniors and seniors, I think the rivalry meant something to them. Since about half our team are freshmen, I'm not sure they even know—I'm going to tell them about it today—I'm not even sure they know there's supposed to be a rivalry. But by the time they get to be juniors and seniors, it'll be a big rivalry. But they've got a whole bunch of seniors on their team, so I'm sure it's a rivalry to them."

**On the importance of having a good offensive line:**

"I think the line of scrimmage is a lot more important than people give it credit for. I think if you can control the line of scrimmage, your chances of winning are dramatic. If you can't control the line of scrimmage and (your opponent can), you're going to lose most every time. When the line of scrimmage is equal, both sides are playing fairly well at the line of scrimmage where that's kind of negated, now the skill guys make the difference. If you're not winning the line of scrimmage, the skill guys can't win the game for you. If you're winning the line of scrimmage, the skill guys will win the game for you. I mean, it's really simple fact. People are throwing the ball so much now, nobody realizes how important those guys up front are on both sides. We just talked about their quarterback being so good and pressure. I can design a whole bunch of fantastic coverage that he cannot read and he'll throw interceptions if we can rush four and get to him. Well, no one else has rushed four and got to him, and I think he's thrown one interception or something the whole year because their offensive line is good. They can't get to him. By the way, four of their starting offensive linemen are seniors."

## **Junior linebacker Troy Cassidy**

### **On the significance of this week's game at Fresno State:**

"I feel this is a big game just for our team. I feel like we've just got to focus. We've been focused so much on trying to be perfect and I feel that's taking away from the excitement of the game and what we're supposed to be doing like really playing for us. We're supposed to be having fun out there and I feel like if we get back to just having fun and coming out excited, then we've got a chance to play with anybody."

### **On the loss to UNLV:**

"Yeah, it definitely was an embarrassing loss for us, but we've got to take a look in the mirror because we've just been so complacent being in these close games. Not to say UNLV was a bad opponent, but we played down to other people's abilities and I feel like we haven't shown 100 percent of what we can do as a team. If we get everyone playing at that 110-percent level, playing for each other and playing with that excitement, like I said, then I feel we (will) display we will display what we can really do."

### **On if the expectations for the team were too high:**

"No. I mean, expectations are always kind of the same for us. We expect to dominate at the line of scrimmage and then we expect to just come out playing fast, flying around and we just kind of lost the fun of the game for whatever reason. That's just kind of what we're emphasizing in practices this week, coming back having fun, being excited to play the game that we love. I feel if we can get everyone on the same page doing that, then we'll be good."

### **On if he agrees with Coach Long that the team has overachieved this year:**

"Like I said with us being in all those close games, we're pretty lucky to be able to have come up with the (wins) that we have come up with. I mean, it just comes down to us not being complacent in those types of games and capitalizing on lots of big plays to start gaining momentum."

## **Junior offensive lineman Daishawn Dixon**

### **On the biggest challenge this week facing Fresno State:**

"Basically, playing smarter than (we did) last year. Be more physical at the line of scrimmage. Coming off the ball knowing what we have to do. It's knowing our assignments and having energy."

### **On the loss to UNLV:**

"Honestly, there's going to be those types of games (when) somebody's playing better than the other team and they come out better prepared, so you just got to take and learn from it. You just got to come back the next week ready to play and be prepared."

### **On if the players consider Fresno State a rivalry game:**

"Of course, it has been ever since I've been here. It's always been something that we've always talked about. 'You have to win to get the Oil Can (Trophy) back.' (There's) such a history behind it. It's always been a big game."

### **On the contributions of the team's younger players:**

"Yeah, I feel that with our young teammates coming in and stepping in for those big games has really helped a lot. We really put a lot of weight on their shoulders to come in and make plays. Because when it's their time to step up, we need them to step up. That's what helped us win."

**On why the offensive line has not living up to raised expectation levels:**

"Probably we just got level-headed honestly. We thought since we had such a good year last season, it would just be a walk in the park this year. Some of us thought this season would go a different way, but it didn't. I'm not saying it's over, but we're still going to try and get better every week from now on."

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